

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

18-20 TRINITY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1628
(860) 240-8300
FAX: (860) 240-8314
Email: pcsw@cga.ct.gov
www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

**Testimony of
Cindy R. Slane, Esq.
Vice Chairperson
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Appropriations Committee
Tuesday, February 22, 2005**

Re: H.B. 6671, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2007, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Merrill, and members of the Committee. My name is Cindy Slane. I am an appointed member and Vice Chair of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women; I am also an assistant clinical professor of law at Quinnipiac University School of Law. Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the proposed budget for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. We respectfully ask you to support the budget proposal for our agency contained in the Governor's budget document.

PCSW has been bringing the voices of women to the State Capitol for over thirty years, and through all of that time, we have been at the forefront of continuing progress for women in our state. Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, state agencies, state leaders, and the public so that we can all work together to improve the status of Connecticut's women and girls. We represent a small investment that produces a sizeable and valuable return: because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, women with health care concerns such as breast cancer and osteoporosis, women business owners, parents seeking child support, women leaving welfare for work, childcare workers, and women entering nontraditional occupations.

Over the past several years, the responsibilities of our agency have increased significantly, both in quantity and complexity. In the 2003 session, for example, the legislature enacted P.A. 03-151, requiring us to collaborate with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to provide ten hours of training per year to all state agency affirmative action officers. Last year, our Public Information Officer worked with staff from the CHRO to provide that training to approximately 300 state agency personnel, supporting them in their enforcement of state and federal affirmative action laws and policies. In the same legislative session, P.A. 03-142 created a Career Ladders Advisory Committee, and named the PCSW as co-chair with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. We are proud of the progress we have made to create an Allied Health Academy to offer career ladders to for health workers who want to become nurses, and of our efforts to build career ladders for childcare workers.

Likewise in 2003, the CT Department of Correction signed a Stipulated Agreement to resolve a sexual harassment suit pending in federal court, an agreement that assigned significant responsibilities to the PCSW for the subsequent four years. Under the agreement, the PCSW is charged with hiring and supervising a Sexual Harassment Consultant to monitor all investigations and resolutions of sexual harassment and retaliation claims within the DOC, and to assist the Department in improving its policies and procedures. Per the agreement, the PCSW also co-chairs a Sexual Harassment Working Group, and assists the DOC in training its employees.

The 2004 session brought additional responsibility, as the General Assembly enacted S.A. 04-8, requiring the PCSW to convene and provide staff support to an interagency task force on trafficking in persons. The Task Force, chaired by Senator Andrea Stillman, has brought together legislators, law enforcement personnel, experts on domestic violence and sexual assault, and community leaders representing immigrants and refugees, to help us understand and respond to the problem of human trafficking in our state.

We are proud of the role we play in bringing these important issues forward, and of the responsibilities we assume in working with the General Assembly, state agencies, and others to address them, but we note that, even as we have taken on many new responsibilities, our budget has been *reduced* by nearly one quarter. We are here tonight to seek restoration of our budget so that we can meet all of our responsibilities, and so that we can do so at the high level of performance that both our elected and appointed officials, and all of the citizens of Connecticut, have a right to expect.

We believe our budget represents the type of state spending that saves money in the long run. For example, in addition working with the Department of Correction pursuant to the Stipulated Agreement, the PCSW has provided Sexual Harassment Prevention Training to 5,000 state employees over five years, in agencies such as the Banking Department, the CT State University System Central Office, the Department of Revenue Services, the Department of Correction, the Office of the Attorney General, and Legislative Management. *PCSW charges no fee to these agencies.* Without the training services provided by the PCSW, these agencies would have had to pay between \$400 and \$600 for each two-hour training session, required by law for all supervisors

The PCSW also designs and participates in programs that directly help women and girls improve their lives. Last week, we began another pre-apprenticeship training class for fifteen women who will graduate and enter paid apprenticeships in the skilled trades or other new fields. Their lives will change in measurable ways as a result of their participation in this program, because they will have the opportunity to earn more money, receive better benefits, and create brighter futures for themselves and their families. The Connecticut Department of Labor and the Hartford Jobs Funnel, under the auspices of Capital Workforce Partners, funds this program. Every year, too, the PCSW works with other partner organizations to provide programs for girls, such as *Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day* and the *Girls and Technology Expo*, to help them develop skills, self-esteem, and new career aspirations.

We provide information and services to the public, as well. We respond to over 400 calls per year from individuals seeking information about state laws and services, and in 2003/2004, staff and Commissioners spoke at forty events sponsored by groups ranging from the CT National Guard, to the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, to students at our vocational high schools.

Our statutory mandate requires us, among other duties, to “...serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with services for women...” C.G.S. 46a-4(b), and we often think of ourselves as a gateway for the concerns of different populations of women across the state. To help our constituencies to bring their issues to the attention of state government, the PCSW convenes the *Connecticut Women’s Agenda*, an open forum for any organization addressing issues that affect the status of women; five *Congressional District Advisory Councils* composed of more than 200 women and men who serve in leadership roles around the state; the *Connecticut Women’s Health Campaign*, a statewide coalition of experts and advocates working together to improve healthcare for women and girls; the *Women’s Economic Development Initiative*, a statewide coalition of women business owners, lenders, and state officials working to improve the climate for women-owned businesses; and the *Nontraditional Employment for Women Steering Committee*, to increase opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technical careers.

Connecticut statute also requires us to “promote consideration of qualified women for all levels of government...” To that end, we maintain a “Talent Bank” of women interested in serving on state boards and commissions. In 2004, there were over 400 women listed in our Talent Bank; seven women from this list were appointed to serve in state government.

We have made a great deal of progress in Connecticut, but women and girls are not fully equal yet: there is still much work to be done. While Connecticut ranks first in the nation in individual earnings, we rank 43rd in terms of the wage gap between women and men. Women and girls are still victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; childcare workers are still paid far less than truck drivers; and women are still far more likely than men to be poor as they grow old.

At the PCSW, we are working for all of our children and grandchildren, so they can grow up in a world where full social, political, and economic equality is possible for everyone. We bring you the voices, the stories, the information, and the analysis that

assist you in your efforts to build that world. We count on you to provide us with the resources that we need to continue to do this good work -- a small investment in service of a most important and valuable goal. Thank you.

